



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Las Cruces District Office
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005
www.blm.gov/nm



In Reply Refer To:

1610-5.G.1.4 (L0310)

April 2013

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Draft TriCounty Resource Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft RMP/EIS) for the New Mexico Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Cruces District Office. The BLM prepared this document in consultation with cooperating agencies, and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, implementing regulations, the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1), and other applicable law and policy.

The TriCounty Planning Area (Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana Counties) consists of about 9.3 million acres of land which includes about 2.82 million surface acres and 3.98 million acres of Federal mineral estate (subsurface) managed by the Las Cruces District Office. When approved, this RMP will replace the White Sands RMP (1986) and portions of the Mimbres RMP (1993) and will guide the management of public land administered by the Las Cruces District Office into the future. The Draft TriCounty RMP/EIS and supporting information is available on the project web site at: <http://www.blm.gov/nm/lascruces>.

The BLM encourages the public to provide information and comments pertaining to the analysis presented in the Draft RMP/EIS. We are particularly interested in feedback concerning the adequacy and accuracy of the proposed alternatives, the analysis of their respective management decisions, and any new information that would help the BLM as it develops the plan. The development of the Draft TriCounty RMP/EIS has taken an unusually long time - scoping began in 2006. This protracted process means that public input is important to help the BLM identify outdated information, errors, and inadvertent omissions. For example, as we readied this document for print, we discovered that we omitted a proposed unit for the Robledo Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Please refer to Appendix G for the description of this ACEC.

In developing the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, which is the next phase of the planning process, the decision maker may select various management decisions from each of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS for the purpose of creating a management strategy that best meets the needs of the resources and values in this area under the BLM multiple-use and sustained yield

mandate. As a member of the public, your timely comments on the TriCounty Draft RMP/EIS will help formulate the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Comments will be accepted for 90 calendar days following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) publication of its Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The BLM can best utilize your comments and resource information submissions if received within the review period.

Comments may be submitted electronically at: BLM_NM_LCDO_Comments@blm.gov. Comments may also be submitted by mail to: Jennifer Montoya, RMP/EIS Team Leader, BLM Las Cruces District Office, 1800 Marquess Street, Las Cruces, NM 88005. To facilitate analysis of comments and information submitted, we strongly encourage you to submit comments in an electronic format.

Your review and comments on the content of this document are critical to the success of this planning effort. If you wish to submit comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, we request that you make your comments as specific as possible. Comments will be more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies, and reference to a section or page number. Comments containing only opinion or preferences will be considered and included as part of the decision making process, although they will not receive a formal response from the BLM.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The BLM will hold public meetings in Truth or Consequences, Alamogordo and Las Cruces, New Mexico. All meetings will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Public meetings to provide an overview of the document, respond to questions, and take public comments will be announced by local media, website, and/or public mailings at least 15 days in advance.

Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS have been sent to affected Federal, State and local government agencies, American Indian Tribes, members of Congress, Las Cruces District Resource Advisory Council, and other local and affected citizens and groups. Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS are available for public inspection at the BLM Las Cruces District Office, the BLM New Mexico State Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Albuquerque District BLM Office, the Socorro BLM Field Office, the Carlsbad BLM Field Office and the Pecos District Office in Roswell, New Mexico as well as public libraries in Las Cruces, Alamogordo, Anthony, and Truth or Consequences.

Thank you for your continued interest in the TriCounty RMP/EIS. We appreciate the information and suggestions you contribute to the planning process. For additional information

or clarification regarding this document or the planning process, please contact *Jennifer Montoya, RMP/EIS Team Leader, BLM Las Cruces District Office at (575) 525-4300 or by email at jamontoy@blm.gov.*

Sincerely,



Bill Childress
District Manager

1 Enclosure